

Escarpment Views

A rustic wooden door with a horse knocker and a transom window, set in a white wall with climbing vines. The door is made of vertical wooden planks and has a metal knocker in the shape of a horse. Above the door is a transom window with three panes. The door is surrounded by a white wall, and there are green vines climbing up the wall and over the door frame. The overall scene is a charming, old-fashioned entrance.

SPRING 2008

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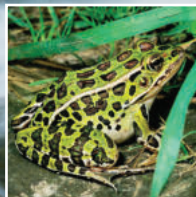
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14-15 PHOTO BY NEIL HESTER

Our Readers, Our Viewers

We're awed by the response we've had to our premier issue. As soon as it "hit the streets," we began getting phone calls, emails, hand-written notecards and subscription orders, from people all over. We've been flooded with ideas and offers to contribute articles and photographs. We'll be hard put to take everyone up on their suggestions. The interest has been gratifying and encouraging.

You, our readers, seem to want to see your lifestyles and values reflected in these pages. Our sense that there's a community of people who treasure this part of the world seems to be valid.

Almost every day we continue to get one or more new subscribers, and we've more than doubled our subscribers since the premier issue came out. To be certain of getting each issue, subscribing is a good idea, as we may have to experiment with our Canada Post free distribution.

We're impressed to see that men are subscribing in almost the same number as women. We've heard that men who've never read a magazine before, are reading ours from cover to cover. This is exciting because usually women are drawn to magazines more than men.

My theory is that it's because our magazine has a stunning centre photo, just like some men's magazines. Men are so visual, they say. Of course our centre spread is suitable for family viewing! This issue's wonderful window onto Hilton Falls is the work of photographer Neil Hester.

I had a call from one lady who thought she had an idea of interest to our "viewers." At first I thought she had made a mistake and meant "readers," but then I realized how perfectly appropriate it is to call *Escarpment Views*' subscribers and readers, our "viewers." Art director Branimir Zlamalik and principal photographer Mike Davis are to be credited with the beautiful look of our magazine.

I did receive one critical email among the wave of responses. One person wanted to know why there had been no mention of the Bruce Trail in our premier issue. I replied that in time, we'll have mentioned the Trail so often that readers – viewers -- might get fed up! Our first reference to the Bruce Trail is in this issue, in our feature article on Scotsdale Farm, which has the main trail as well as some blue side trails going through it.

Hiking on the Bruce Trail this spring is a good way to listen for the mating calls of frogs. This being the Year of the Frog, we celebrate the 10 species to be found locally with words and photographs by naturalist Don Scallen.

We have a couple of gardening articles that will get green thumbs twitching. We also sent Trudi Down to peek into Halton's Fresh Food Box for a description of how local, fresh produce is getting to people's kitchens. Misty Ingraham peels back the world of onions in cooking. A new page in this issue shows some of the events that have been happening in Escarpment communities. We're thrilled to introduce a new columnist, renowned actor Seana McKenna, who will be giving us the view from backstage, on how to appreciate live theatre.

So, gentle viewers, feast your eyes on what we offer within these pages.

Gloria

Gloria Hildebrandt
Editor



In memory of Daphne Shropshall,
concerned citizen, local
activist and good neighbour.

Healthy spring:
a bee busy on a geranium
(cranesbill).



Escarpment Views

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Events Along the Rock

Selected snapshots by Mike Davis show where *Escarpment Views* has been in recent months. If you have an event you'd like us to feature next time, just send us an invitation!



Giller Prize-winner Elizabeth Hay, far right, spoke to 247 people brought together by the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW) in Hamilton on Jan. 29, raising more than \$2,000 for scholarships. Joining her are from left, Bryan Prince representing his bookstore, and CFUW-Hamilton's president Marilyn Hill and treasurer Joanne Curtis.



Cutting up at a party on Feb. 2 at Terra Cotta Inn for the 25th Egg Nog Jog which raised \$5,500 for Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills (CASHh), are from left, Sheila Smith of CASHh, Joe Cleary for sponsor The Ontario Migraine Clinic, Joanne Thompson of CASHh and Jim Clarke of Georgetown Runners.



Helping to launch the first issue of *Escarpment Views* at a party at Georgetown's Main St. Inn on Feb. 5 are from front row left, Brigitte Schreyer, Main St. Inn's Sharon Leal, and for the Georgetown BIA, Judith Avery. From rear left: Klaus Schreyer, co-publishers Mike Davis and Gloria Hildebrandt and Main St. Inn's Brian Flood.

On March 2 in the Giant's Rib Discovery Centre at the Dundas Valley Conservation Area, Marcus Buck, far right, gave a slide show about the Eramosa Karst in Hamilton. Joining him from left are Mary Jane Page and Karen Priebe of Friends of the Eramosa Karst and Greg Warchol of the Toronto Caving Group.



Foodstuffs' cooking class at 87 Up on Main St. in Georgetown was dipping into Asian flavours on March 27. From left: Monika Caemmerer, Edith Caemmerer, instructor Deborah Palmer, Ian Henderson, Franz Schmidt, Elaine Schmidt, Kevin Hern, Kim Hern, Jan McKeown.

The 3rd Annual Food & Drink Fest in Hamilton March 28 to 30 offered plenty of low-priced tastings from local restaurants, breweries, wineries and suppliers.





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Spring in the Living Garden

By Charles Hildebrandt

Harbingers of Spring When the first bell-shaped flowers poke through the white of winter we feel that it won't be long until our garden is awake. The snowdrops, prudently planted at the sunny side of the house, defy the cold and inspire us with the expectation that the planting season will soon be with us. And if we look into the waterlogged boggy areas at the edge of our lakes we find the leathery leaves of the skunk cabbage, an early riser as well. By the way, notwithstanding its unappetizing appellation, this member of the brassica is quite palatable, provided its green leaves have been thoroughly cooked to minimize the plant's strong odour.

Meanwhile the ubiquitous *Scilla Siberica*, the siberian scillas of the Canadian gardens, mingle their heavenly blue with the white of the snowdrops and if the sun of the last few days continues to shine, the emerging crocus impart a profusion of colour into our flowerbeds. The 12 different shapes and colours of the daffodils and narcissus emerge, interspersed with the lowly, semi-wild dicentra, whose corms look deceptively like those of the squirrel corn with which it is related. Another member of this small family of watery-juiced herbs, the fanciful bleeding heart is just emerging from its winter dormancy and we must wait awhile to admire its teardrop-shaped flowers.

Spring is Here

Even in Canada's south we cannot expect to see any colour in our care-

fully constructed perennial beds, where lilies and geraniums, dahlias and roses will compete with gladioli and asters to be the stars of the summer. Yet if the past winter has been mild, the white flower of the *Hellebores Niger*, the Christmas rose, may poke through the snow and the *Erica Carnea*, the spring-blooming heather, will not be far behind.

In the depth of the forest, where patches of snow have given way to moisture-laden humus, the green needle-like leaves of the wild onions are alive, reclaiming their territory. Clumps of evergreen sedges prepare for the raising of their minute flowers and the carmine-red of the tiny fungus that we call "pixie cup" pokes out of the wet ground where weeks ago snow fleas pursued their strange way of life.

The winter-hardy Christmas fern, the various types of wood ferns and the royal fern which, incidentally, loves the moisture of the bog, show their evergreen fronds, but the ubiquitous sensitive fern is prudent enough not to break the ground before the last day of frost. Can we trust it and plant our tomatoes when the sensitive comes out? Mosses and lichens, of course, don't care about frost. Whey they get enough moisture, and they do from melting snow, they puff up and fairly double their size to form those lovely green cushions, the sponges of the forest.

In the woodlot behind the garden, untouched by the developer's greedy axe, we marvel at the show displayed by the bloodroot, as it shoves its flower stalk with the white star-shaped blossom through

PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS
BACKGROUND PHOTO: DIANA ZLAMALIK

Spring beauties, clockwise from top left: snowdrops, scilla, daffodils, crocuses

the curled-up leaf. Reliable sources assure us that the blood-red sap of the plant, particularly in its root, was used by Aboriginals as body paint to increase their fervour when going on the war path against a neighbouring tribe.

Less capricious are the chemicals produced by many other plants, some poisonous, like the water-growing hemlock of Socrates' fate, many others of a beneficial nature. The strong-scented chamomile comes to mind, the

coltsfoot which unknowing government agents have put on the eradication list, despite the fact that leaves, stems and flowers of this plant qualify to be on the shelves of the pharmacy.

What is not so widely known is the anaesthetizing effect of all parts of the northern prickly ash, its Latin name the tongue-breaking *Xanthoxylum Americanum*. Chewing leaves, leaf buds or twigs of this "toothache tree," as it was dubbed by pioneer farmers, is a tried and

tested means of alleviating the pain from an infected tooth. And then there are the nuts of the butternut, if we can get them before the squirrels, which are said to provide a foolproof laxative.

How amazing it is to observe how plants have adapted to their surroundings. We see the spring beauty forming rings around beech trees, toothwort (*Dentaria*) favouring the community of sugar maples where there seem to be nutrients conducive to their growth, how squirrel corn

and dutchman's breeches settle in the alkaline soil found around sandstone rocks. Because the host trees, let alone the sandstone rocks, derive no benefit from these wildflowers growing at their feet, we cannot see the relationship as a symbiotic one. Yet the wildflowers are finding their ecological niche. ■

Charles Hildebrandt is a naturalist and gardener living north of Georgetown. He taught the editor of this magazine to write.



Sanctuary During the Year of the Frog

Text and photographs by Don Scallen

In spring the Niagara Escarpment awakens to the life-affirming calls of numberless frogs and toads. The voices start just after snow melt with the “quacking” of wood frogs and continue into the balmy days of summer with the sonorous “jug-o-rums” of bullfrogs. This is beautiful music, a soundtrack of a healthy environment.

It follows then, that when this music dies, the environment is in trouble, and alarmingly, this is happening throughout the world. Frogs are falling victim to habitat loss, pollution and disease. To raise awareness of this situation 2008 has been designated as the Year of the Frog by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. With habitat loss the main threat here in Ontario, the wetlands and woodlands of the Niagara Escarpment offer precious sanctuary for 10 species of frogs and toads.



Wood Frog

These frogs are aptly named, for they are utterly dependent on woodlands and forests. They appear in earliest spring and enter the icy water of temporary ponds, known as vernal pools, to breed. These ponds, void of hungry fish, are critical nurseries for wood frog tadpoles and the young of numerous other amphibian species. The Niagara Escarpment, beaded as it is with such spring pools, is a haven for wood frogs.



Western Chorus Frog

Chorus frogs are tiny springtime singers that accompany wood frogs and spring peepers to vernal pools. Running fingers along the stiff bristles of a comb approximates their call. These frogs are more comfortable in open areas than most, thriving in meadows and shrubby areas as well as open woodlands. Chorus frogs have a patchier distribution than many of our frogs and have suffered unexplained declines in some areas.



American Toad

A true amphibian survivor. Though most abundant in wooded areas American toads try gamely to hang on in even the most altered human environments. They regularly hop into backyards to gorge on urban sow bugs and earthworms. American toads will use almost any body of water for breeding. Their mellifluous trilling rises from ponds, roadside ditches and even swimming pools in mid spring.



Grey Tree Frog

These changelings wear a variety of garb depending, in part on the colour of the surface they are resting on. They can be grey as suggested by their name but also almost any imaginable shade of green. Hidden by their wondrous camouflage they are not often seen, though they are by no means uncommon. Wherever there are ponds and trees they can be found. Grey tree frogs use their fat adhesive finger tips to climb high into tree canopies where they sometimes serenade us with their short-burst trilling on moist days during summer and fall.



Spring Peeper

Though spring peepers have been silenced in much of the GTA, the Niagara Escarpment still resounds with glorious peeper choruses from early spring through May. In good habitat the cacophony of a “peeper pond” after dark can be mesmerizing. Spring peepers leave wetlands after breeding and spend the balance of the year foraging among ferns and mosses in woodlands.



Northern Leopard Frog

These familiar spotted frogs grunt and snore in Escarpment ponds in late April and May. Leopard frogs are habitat generalists and, given a permanent pond and a patch of natural land, can exist even within our urban areas. They spend much time in water, but also wander widely in meadows, growing fat on grasshoppers.



Pickerel Frog

Inhabitants of sylvan brooks fringed by jewelweed and cardinal flowers, these are frogs of pristine habitat. In the Golden Horseshoe the Niagara Escarpment is a pickerel frog stronghold; below the Escarpment the habitat is simply too sullied to support them. Pickerel frog males produce a weak snore in May to attract mates.



Green Frog

Green frogs are, along with American toads, the amphibians best able to deflect the slings and arrows of civilization. They are found in virtually all permanent wetlands in southern Ontario including polluted urban streams. These peripatetic frogs often strike out cross country to poke their noses into backyards and establish residence in tiny garden pools. From such sites and just about all other permanent bodies of water, green frogs pluck their banjo string voices from late spring into summer.



Bullfrog

The bruisers of our frog clan, bullfrogs live only in permanent bodies of water, where their tadpoles take from two to four years to develop. They are not uniformly distributed along the Escarpment and are often absent from seemingly suitable habitat. Bullfrog males sing their deep bass notes throughout the summer. The females lay platter-sized egg masses on the surface of the water.



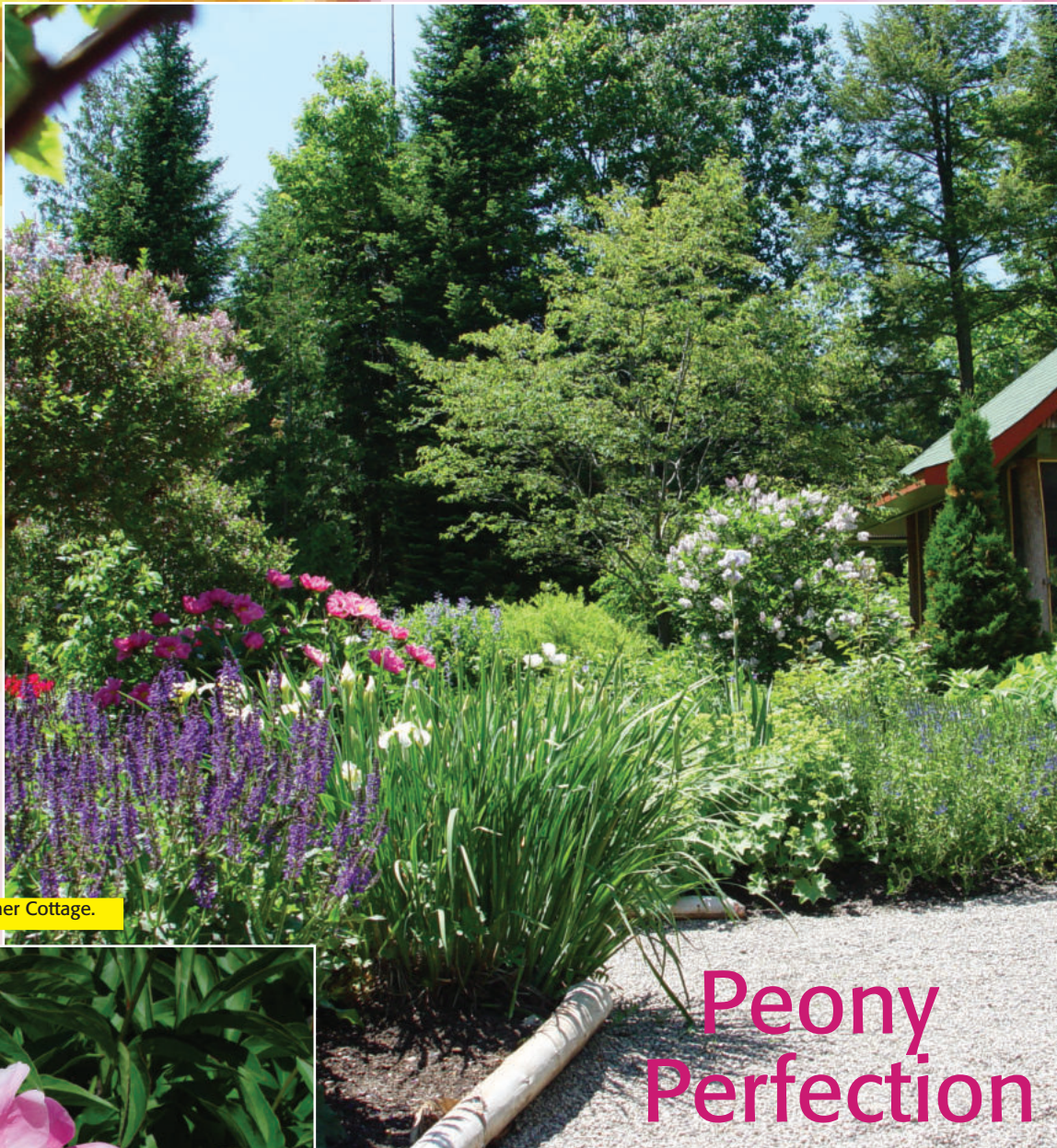
Mink Frog

Perhaps “Canadian frog” would be a better moniker for these frogs, because their range lies overwhelmingly through Canada. Mink frogs look a little like both green frogs and bullfrogs. A field guide will help sort out the subtleties. They are northern frogs, and on the Niagara Escarpment, not found south of Caledon. Their voices, sounding like the distant tapping of hammers on wood, can be heard during summer.

*Don Scallen is a teacher, writer and ardent frog fancier from Georgetown.
All 10 species were photographed by Don Scallen on or near Escarpment lands.*



Lush flower beds surround Kingfisher Cottage.



Peony Perfection

By Gloria Hildebrandt

PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIES

David Warburton's garden in Hockley Valley is enchanting. A professional plantsman, landscape designer and nursery owner, Warburton has made peonies one of his specialties. His annual Peony Festival, scheduled this year for June 21 and 22, is the perfect excuse to explore his fabulous flower beds.



Peony "Nymphe"

Right from the massive timber arch at the driveway entrance, past the new straw bale building, the grounds are a delight. Lush gardens seem to go on endlessly, surrounding his residence, built in Storybook architectural

style and named Kingfisher Cottage. A lazy creek meanders along a laneway of the property.

Punctuating the gardens are cedar structures including an arbor covered with vines and a bridge leading to a platform with benches. The garden paths curve and wind

All photos taken in David Warburton's garden



Peony "Paula Fay"



Tree peony unnamed Lemon Yellow

through the beds, fully planted with flowers of all description. In late June, the peony reigns here as queen, rewarding the visitor with splashes of various colours and shapes at every turn.

"There are thousands of peony cultivars now," says Warburton. "They keep hybridizing them. Flowers come and go in vogue and fashion but the peony is almost always a favourite. They're hardy, generous with blooms and give so much for so little."

From 30 to 50 different varieties of peonies will be for sale at the peony festival, in large containers with good root balls, ready for planting.



Curving path leads to a vine-covered arbor.

Cedar bridge and resting platform spans the garden's creek.



Peony "Coral Charm"



Peony "Festiva Maxima"

Peony "America"

Garden Bed Design

To get the lush look of Warburton's gardens, plan your beds around the peony plants. He recommends planting each one so that it's fully visible and unimpeded.

"Leave room so they can present themselves," he advises. "There's a rhyme that really applies to peonies. The first year they sleep, the second year they creep, the third year they leap."

Since peonies bloom in June, Warburton suggests grouping them together with other flowers of this time, such as poppies and irises. Plants in the colours of silver and blue also go well with peonies.

Care and Feeding

It's true that peonies don't like to be moved, so if digging one up, it's good to get a very big root ball. Transplanting in early fall is best, as the peony roots may easily fall apart into divisions at that time. Planting can still be done in spring, especially if the root ball is large enough. Peony

roots have a great corm or tuber and transplants should have at least three incipient buds or "eyes" and be planted in a very large hole.

Peonies like full sun but their blooms last a bit longer in afternoon shade. Plant the corms no more than two inches below the soil surface.

"Tug the plant up a little after planting," is one of Warburton's secrets.

He recommends feeding peonies nitrogen and trace minerals a couple of times before they set buds, and then to hold back the nitrogen so they flower instead of producing too many leaves. Peonies should be deadheaded and the stems cut back to the leaves after blooming. At this time they can be fed minerals.

Green leaves should be left for the energy to return to the plant roots. In the fall they can be given a half strength of full feed. Only when the plant has collapsed should it be cut back for winter, and dead leaves removed to prevent disease. These leaves should not be added to the garden compost.

Support the Blooms

Top-heavy peonies may keel over under their weight of blooms and begin rotting in contact with the ground. To get the most out of the blooms, peonies may need support. Warburton points out that some, like the "America" that he grows, is beautifully self supporting.

For the others, he advises investing in strong peony rings that have adjustable heights and widths. When the peony is a foot tall, place the ring around it at the height you think it will reach. The ring can always be pulled up higher as the plant grows.

"Any decent-sized nursery should have many grades of rings," says Warburton. "Lee Valley has a good ring. Or you could always use twiggy sticks planted close to the stems."

Warburton's Peony Festival will offer peonies and everything related to them, from potted plants for the garden to peony-themed art and crafts for the home. For more information on the Peony Festival, see www.tillingthesoul.com or call 1 888 860 6065. ■



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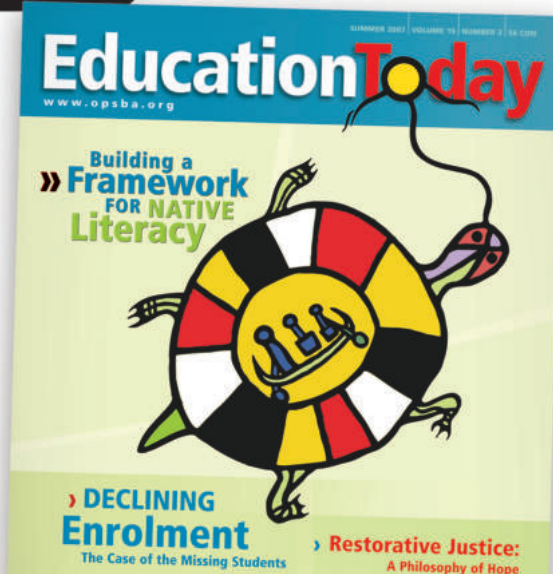
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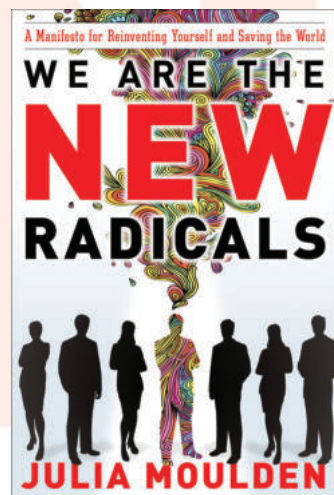


Hilton Falls and historic mill site, Sixteen Mile Creek, Milton.

Photograph by Neil Hester

Views from Local Talent

This time, we feature three recent noteworthy books by authors and photographers who live, work or have their roots in Escarpment lands.



We Are the New Radicals By Julia Moulden

Once upon a time, **Julia Moulden** and I were in the same grade at Limehouse Public School. I admired her writing even then, and remember an impressive Centennial Year project she created about the prime ministers. We also attended Georgetown District High School together. Julia went on to build an impressive career as a speechwriter for prestigious clients. A few years ago, a painful divorce jarred her into changing her life.

In a special interview with *Escarpment Views*, she explained “I wasn’t sure I wanted to do the same thing for the next 20 years. I began to reflect on the idealism of my youth, and wondered if I could find a way to connect that young woman with the mature professional I’d become.”

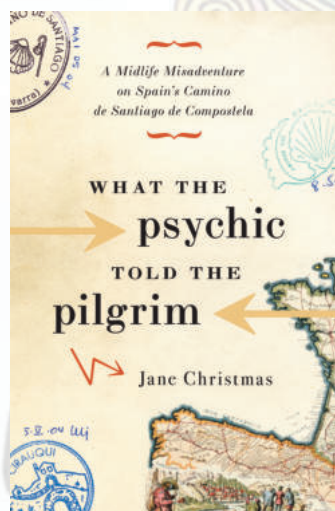
She began interviewing people she admires, and came to identify them as “new radicals,” or people who realize that how they earn their living can become the way they give back.

We Are the New Radicals is a book of short profiles of inspiring people who are saving their chosen parts of the world. Examples are Jamie Kennedy, who champions local farmers and products, and Mary Gordon, founder of Roots of Empathy, a classroom program that prevents bullying by teaching empathy and caring.

Julia is now based in Toronto, but **she tells us** “Growing up with a close connection to nature helped me appreciate the natural world as something precious, and not just another consumable. We could **see the Escarpment from our living room** window and it looms large in my memory.”

We Are the New Radicals contains worksheets to help readers determine how they might develop into a new stage of their own lives. The Web site wearethenewradicals.com offers an online community and more information.

McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 2008,
\$24.95



What the Psychic Told the Pilgrim: A Midlife Misadventure on Spain's Camino de Santiago de Compostela

By Jane Christmas

Hamilton writer Jane Christmas gives an eye-opening account of hiking the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, an ancient pilgrimage

route that covers 800 km of varied terrain in northern Spain and takes about one month to complete.

In an interview with *Escarpment Views*, Christmas explains “What initially attracted me to the Camino was the concept of making a spiritual/religious pilgrimage, and the Camino de Santiago was constructed as a route leading to the shrine of James the Apostle. I also liked the idea that the Camino, in its 1,000-year history, has created a network of hostels and simple path-side cafes that cater to the pilgrim traffic. The route itself swings through some charming medieval towns and cities as well as through woods, and meadows and wide, vacant plains.”

What’s astonishing is how overpopular the route is. Christmas writes of floods of pilgrims competing for bunk beds in the *refugios* or pilgrim lodgings. Hot showers aren’t guaranteed. Breakfasts can consist of a piece of stale baguette and reheated coffee. The route is so crowded that spiritual reflection would seem to be impossible.

Ironically, Christmas lives close to the Bruce Trail, but **she admits to Escarpment Views** that she wasn’t totally aware of the Trail before she began training for the Camino.

Although **she’s now working on hiking the entire Bruce Trail**, it won’t be all at once because, as she tells *Escarpment Views*, “It’s not hospitable toward long-distance trekkers like me who do not and will not camp.” She observes that European culture is built around walking and public transit, and adds that on the Bruce Trail, “A judicious and respectful use of conveniences like hostels and rest stops would go a long way to creating a culture of walkers in this country.”

Her book may make you appreciate the stillness that can be experienced on the Bruce Trail, but it is an entertaining tale of middle-aged

By Gloria Hildebrandt

women seeking meaning in life while battling overcrowding, blisters, lecherous male pilgrims and line ups for *cafés con leche*.

Greystone Books, 2007, \$21.95



Niagara Escarpment: A Photographic Journey from Niagara Falls to Tobermory

Sandy Bell, Vic MacBournie and John MacRae

Terrific views of lands close to the Niagara Escarpment fill this book. All were photographed by Sandy Bell, Vic MacBournie or John MacRae, who met in a photographic club in Burlington and went on to form The Spirit of Nature, which works to **protect natural areas**.

Large, full-colour photographs completely fill about 106 of the over-sized pages. Text is minimal, only serving to identify and explain the subject of each photo. **Joan Little, former chair** of the Niagara Escarpment Commission, has written an introduction that provides a comprehensive description and history of the Niagara Escarpment and efforts to protect it. This is fascinating reading in itself, but together with the photographs, makes a compelling case for the claim that these lands are of **worldwide significance**.

James Lorimer & Company Ltd.,
2006, \$55



Misty's View of Cooking: The Foundation

My biggest pet peeve is a recipe that suggests you toss a load of raw onions, vegetables and meats into a slow cooker in the morning and return home ready to serve a delicious dinner. In the wrong hands, or should there have been an interruption in electrical service that afternoon, you could serve a dangerously toxic stew without flavour or integrity of ingredients.

The chemical composition of onions changes when they are sautéed. Adding heat quickly in a flavourful oil or butter activates the onion and prepares it to be transformed into a golden, translucent ingredient ready to receive the flavours of herbs and spices, the vital secret in flavour-building a stew or soup.

Onions can also become the most delicious garnish for a dish.

your taste buds will soar to even greater heights. Forget the meat that asked for this garnish, and enjoy it on its own or on toast! The family of onions has been a chef's ultimate secret since the time of Careme and Escoffier, the founding fathers of French cuisine.

I encourage you to learn about shallots, green onions, yellow onions, red onions, leeks, Spanish on-

Cooking is like playing a musical instrument. It requires skill and some instructions. For the musician, sheet music often does that job and for the cook, recipes can. Yet how many people can pick up a musical instrument and play pieces from sheet music alone? Have you ever made a violin sound like you were killing a cat? Cooking without some level of skill can evoke a similar result, regardless of how encouraging your recipes are.

Secret number one: recipes are often missing vital chefs' techniques. There may be a hidden cheekiness in recipes that have been written expecting a cook to know a thing or two before getting out the pan. Like sheet music, recipes can only go so far before lack of skill gets in the way.

As you look forlornly at your stack of promising cook books, do not despair. Cooking is not astrophysics; it just requires a few fundamental tips to get you on your way to virtuoso culinary performances.

The most misunderstood and integral ingredient in all savoury recipes is the onion. It forms the foundation of all soups, stews, sauces, and dishes that require and invite a complexity of flavour. Since they comprise the foundation of any culinary construction, onions cannot be added as an afterthought.

This jewel of a food is not expensive, but it is misrepresented most of the time. Hold the onions? I say not, since this many-layered bulb is a versatile chameleon that can provide unlimited flavour delights if you know how to use it.



Delicious building blocks: clockwise from top left: chives, Chipollinis, red onions, white onions, scallions, leeks, Spanish onion, honey whites, elephant shallots

PHOTOS: MIKE DAVIS

Each and every item of food that goes into cooking requires respect for and understanding of its integral purpose and potential. **Onions demand perhaps the most attention.** Apprentice chefs can vouch for the hours of tearful skill-building they put in to learning how to make an onion do its many, many tricks.

Cool, crisp, and thinly sliced, raw red onions make smoked salmon sing. Thicker sliced, sweet onions add zip and crunch to a burger hot off the BBQ. But add these same items *raw* to a stew and the result is a sour, flavourless mess.

Think Provimi liver covered in a nest of caramelized tender onions. In many cases, this onion garnish is what carries the dish into permanent memory. The same old onion that could have been hacked up with a \$29.99 gadget, can be correctly sliced in half from the root top north to south, and then across the onion in an east to west fashion, finally to be massaged slowly in a pan, becoming a glistening swirl of intense sweet and savoury flavour.

Put it on anything and you will be in for an incredible taste sensation...drizzle on a few drops of the best, viscous Balsamic vinegar and

ions, white onions, and Vidalia onions. Experiment with them, since it's cheap to do so. Let them show you the entire range of things they can do. Give them fast heat, then slow, known by chefs as sweating an onion, then take this sweating to the caramel stage by low, slow, monitored cooking.

And remember this, if nothing else: never, ever, add raw onions as a late addition to anything that is going to be cooked or baked! I might cry if you did.

Misty Ingraham is a chef and co-owner of the catering business The Portable Feast at Home, in Ancaster.

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Volunteers sort fresh produce at
Georgetown Christian Fellowship Church.

Halton's Local Fresh Food

by Trudi Down

PHOTOS BY MIKE DAVIS

At 7:30 a.m. the delivery trucks start arriving. By 8:30 the volunteer packers start to arrive. By 9:30 loose food items like mushrooms and bananas have been weighed and bagged or bundled. At 10:00 the first of 290 green recyclable plastic boxes makes its way down a long conveyor belt.

It's a snowy March Tuesday and St. Christopher's Anglican Church in Burlington is the site of the monthly sorting and packing of food boxes for the Halton Fresh Food Box program. Now entering its fourth year, the non-profit program provides a box of fruits and vegetables once a month to anyone who subscribes. The majority of subscribers are seniors and people in financial need. A number, however, are people who want to support local farmers and eat locally grown produce.

The group of more than 20 helpers is well organized. Working in pairs along both sides of the conveyor, they select bags of carrots or bunches of celery from the tables behind them and place the items in the boxes sliding past. A sign posted at each of the 15 food stations tells them how much is to be placed into the boxes. To each box will also be added a newsletter with announcements, recipes and tips on food storage.

Program coordinator Brenda Moher explains that the program arose out of a steering committee formed in 2000 by members of the

community who were concerned with the issue of poverty in Halton Region. "There was a real desire to do something immediate and effective for the vulnerable in our community," she says. "Poverty in Halton is hidden."

There may not be individuals begging for handouts at street corners, but the region is home to many single parents, young adults living on government assistance, seniors with meager pensions and unemployed new Canadians, all of whom struggle every month to make ends meet financially.

Statistics Canada for 2000/01 reports that 8.25 per cent or about 32,000 of Halton residents lack the finances to make healthy food purchases, or to buy enough food for themselves and their families. The survey notes that between 23 and 45 per cent of children live in poverty in Halton Region, depending on the geographic location.

The Fresh Food Box program is the only one of its size and focus in the area, Moher adds, and is based on Toronto's successful Good Food Box Program, now in its 15th year.

Moher, a registered dietician, has 20 years of experience in the public health sector. Working about 21 hours a week from an office at St. Christopher's, she is responsible for ordering and ensuring delivery of the produce, organizing



Halton's Local Fresh Food



volunteers, obtaining subscriber evaluations and feedback, writing the newsletter and managing the finances.

The idea is simple: provide a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables once a month for a reasonable cost. Buy the food locally and in bulk, to help keep costs down. Buy from local farmers, whenever possible. A small box costs \$15, the larger one, \$20. Brenda says the amounts represent \$20 and \$25 worth of food, respectively.

The program encourages people to eat more healthily, reaches out to vulnerable-income people, provides a market for local farmers and helps build a stronger community. There are no criteria for participating; no one is asked any questions and anyone from Halton Region can subscribe. Currently, about 500 people purchase the monthly box, far too many for one location to handle. Consequently, 250 of the boxes are filled at the Georgetown Christian Fellowship Church for distribution to subscribers there and in Acton and Milton.

It's amazing what can still be obtained locally in March! The sorting tables include locally grown carrots, onions, apples, potatoes and mushrooms. Cauliflower, oranges, limes, plums and cabbages are among the other items included in today's boxes.

It's a bit of a balancing act, Brenda acknowledges. "We really try to provide fresh food for people, but

they have limited incomes and the box prices are fixed. Supply can be a problem, too. This year, for example, local pears were done by December." What she can't buy locally, she will obtain from elsewhere in Ontario, from other parts of Canada and, lastly, from offshore distributors.

By 10:30, 100 small boxes sit at the far end of the conveyor, filled and topped with a lid. By noon, all the day's boxes are packed and loaded on trucks for delivery to one of the 12 pickup sites around Burlington and Oakville. The Georgetown location delivers to another 10 sites. Pickup locations include senior centres, food banks, several churches and area schools. Every pickup location has a site coordinator who manages the process of ordering, payment and delivery of the boxes at the site.

"The volunteers are what keep the program going," Brenda says. "We really couldn't do it without them."

Approximately 120 men and women, young and retired, pitch in every month to help with sorting and packing, delivery, lunch preparation, even knocking down the produce boxes for recycling. Some are the very people who benefit from the program, including new Canadians grateful for help with their food bills and wanting to give back to the community.

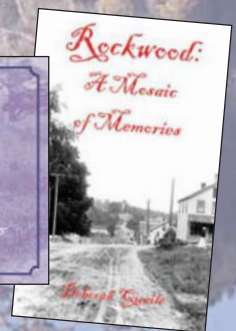
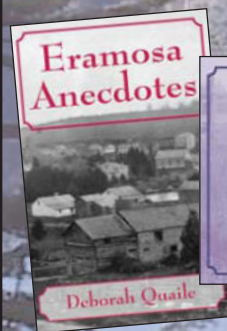
The boxes pay for themselves. Funding to administer the program is received from Halton Region, and from St. Christopher's which provides office space and equipment, including a phone. Additional support is received from Choices 4 Health and from the Burlington Community Foundation. A volunteer steering committee provides overall direction and planning for the program.

Anyone interested in buying a box or having a drop site in their neighbourhood should contact Brenda Moher at 905 634 8645. ■

Trudi Down provides writing, editing, research and proofreading skills for clients in business, arts, advertising and education, through www.thecorporateword.com.

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Scotsdale Farm: A Hidden Treasure

By Gloria Hildebrandt
OLDER PHOTOS COURTESY
EMERSON CLARKE
CONTEMPORARY PHOTOS
BY MIKE DAVIS

Scotsdale as Film Set

Scotsdale Farm has been used as a film set for various projects over the years. Cosmetic changes were made to some of the outbuildings for filming, and remain visible today. Here are some of the projects that have used Scotsdale as a location:

The Recruit starring Al Pacino & Colin Farrell, 2003

The Long Kiss Goodnight starring Geena Davis & Samuel L. Jackson, 1996

Psi Factor: Chronicles of the Paranormal with Dan Aykroyd, 1996

The Campbells TV series, 1986

Scotsdale Farm is one of the hidden treasures along the Niagara Escarpment. Its 531 acres of rolling farmland, forests, swamps and Escarpment outcroppings are freely open for the public to enjoy.

Long driveways and parts of the Bruce Trail, the wonderful footpath that travels the length of the Escarpment, invite hikers, dog walkers, horse riders, birders and amateur botanists.

The well-used door to the tack room of Scotsdale's stables.



The main Bruce Trail runs through some of the southern portion of Scotsdale Farm, and there are a few Blue Side Trails that offer access to an interesting variety of terrain.



Worth its weight: this Shorthorn, named Scotsdale Bullion, was sold for \$8,000.



The Scotsdale barn complex in perfect repair in 1962, photographed from the east. Note the open verandah.

Scotsdale is located on the north edge of the Escarpment about eight km north of Georgetown on Trafalgar Rd. The main entrance to Scotsdale is roughly halfway between the hamlets of Silvercreek and Ballinafad.

South of the rolling farm fields is the original cinder driveway, now part of the Bennett Heritage Trail, a side trail off the main Bruce Trail. The driveway used to join Trafalgar Rd. until the steep hill was flattened during recent road changes.

Both driveways lead to the farmstead where a modest house sits within a low stonewall garden. On the north side are two small cabins, one a former guest house and the second, a former car garage. Underground heating pipes used to warm the guest house in chilly seasons, although it would be closed off each winter.

Further to the north is a separate, two-storey farmhouse where Emerson Clarke, who was farm manager of Scotsdale for decades, lived with his family.

Two big gable-roofed barn, of the style called early Central Ontario, are situated just east of the main house. Don't be fooled by the big front porch that was added for a film shoot. The space that this takes up used to be the farm's machinery shed.

The barns were very much working buildings in their prime. No expense seems to have been spared in their construction. The barn close to the house was built for six or seven Arabian horses which were mainly used for riding, although some were bred and sold. Finely constructed horse stalls, now with paint peeling off the iron bars, were the work of Beattie of Fergus, a company that had a reputation for excellent craftsmanship.

The barn further from the house was dedicated to Shorthorn cattle, the Bennetts' specialty. The two barns are connected by a covered walk-



Stewart in October 1972.

way that used to be open to the air, but has been permanently enclosed by a film production company. It could be argued that the barns were built to a more lavish standard than the farmhouse, which is very modest given its owners.

The Bennetts

Stewart and Violet Bennett created Scotsdale Farm beginning in 1938 when they bought a 200-acre farm. Millionaires when a million really meant something, they gradually acquired neighbouring farms and land until they had 540 beautiful, varied acres skirting the edge of the Niagara Escarpment.

This was not their only residence, however. They maintained a penthouse apartment on Prince Arthur Ave. in Toronto, although they rarely stayed there.

In 1944 Bennett became president of Acton's Beardmore & Co. In 1946, he was hired by

Canada Packers Inc. as vice president, a position he held until his retirement in 1965. In 1953 Bennett was appointed president of the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair.

The Bennetts worked their farm for breeding livestock. Their Arabian horses were descended from Sussex, England, and in particular, Lady Wentworth's Crabbet Stud.

Internationally Famous Shorthorns

Their Shorthorn cattle originally came from Scotland, and over the years, won prizes in international competitions. In 1970 they made history by shipping the first Canadian-born Shorthorn bulls to Scotland, their country of origin, as breeding stock.

Clarke, who accompanied the young bulls on the airplane to Scotland, explains "the Scottish Shorthorns didn't die out entirely, they wanted new blood. It was time. Our Shorthorns had

A Trail Runs Through It





Violet and Stewart in front of the Scotsdale house in 1967.



The pond was home to a family of swans for many years.



Violet and Stewart Bennett in 1970 with the two young bulls that were sent to Scotland.

some Canadian genetics, which is what they wanted. They went to a woman near Perth who wanted to bring some into her herd.”

Clarke remembers that the bulls were enclosed in dark crates but that they showed no stress or anxiety during or after the flight to Scotland.

Ontario Heritage

In 1982, by which time Violet and Stewart Bennett had both died without children or relatives interested in taking over the farm, the property was given to the Ontario Heritage Foundation, now called the Ontario Heritage Trust. Since then, it has been open at no charge for the public to enjoy. A parking lot has been created on the west side of the main farmhouse and some interpretive signs have been added to the property. ■

Emmerson Springs

Scotsdale Farm holds treasures from as long as 500 years ago. In 1984, archaeologist William Fox discovered several middens, or refuse dumps, that were part of an Iroquoian village from the 1500s. Without doing more than clearing away branches and leaves from a likely spot, Fox discovered several important artifacts, including stone tool fragments, a bone splinter awl, a bone bead fragment and a worked antler fragment.

These remains were found at the village site in a field overlooking Owl Creek in the eastern portion of the farm, but Fox also found some artifacts in other parts of Scotsdale, suggesting widespread Native hunting, butchering and gathering activities. Fox named the village site Emmerson Springs after Emerson Clarke, although he provided a misspelling.

In 1994, the Ontario Heritage Foundation had another archaeological assessment done. Further studies were done by university students in 2002 and 2003. Finds include a clay pipe with a face carved onto the bowl, and evidence of a hearth inside a longhouse.

Laurentian University students learn excavation techniques at an archaeological field school at Scotsdale Farm in 2003. Photo courtesy of Laurentian University.



Maureen Smith Side Trail, with one end close to the 8th Line, was named in honour of Maureen Smith of Georgetown, left, who has worked tirelessly to promote the Halton Hills chapter of the Toronto Bruce Trail Club.



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Seana's View: Why Bother with Theatre?

To summarize the experience, "You had to be there." It is live. You cannot rewind, pause or fast-forward a play. As each moment on stage happens, it disappears. Like life, theatre is ephemeral. Part of its beauty is its transience. If you don't catch that play during its run, you've missed it. You can't rent the DVD. It is per-

formed by a specific group of people for a different group of people each night. It is, to use 1960s' vernacular, a "happening." Each performance is unique, because even if the cast is the same, the audience is different every night. And the audience is a crucial part of the experience. Unlike cinema, the audience affects the players.

Your laughter as a group may force actors to pause, even to stop the play for a while. The actors will skirt around and through your reactions, because they hear you. The relationship between actors and audience in the theatre is two way. While the audience may go out of a theatre saying "That was a great show," or "That was dull," the actors may say "What a fantastic house tonight" or "That was a tough crowd."

You are not unnoticed, even if you are in the dark. When you see a movie, you don't care if the theatre is full. You may be thrilled to be the only one there. But with

a play, you want to be surrounded by other theatre-goers. It is a collective, communal experience. Strangers come to hear and see a story told by other people, who are not larger than life, as in film, or smaller as in television, but life-size. And usually, except in musicals, you are hearing the natural voice, unamplified. If someone cries in the same room as you, they are revealing themselves to you at that very moment. It is intimate, voyeuristic. And can be uncomfortable. Or exhilarating. Or comforting, because you realize "I have felt that. I am not alone." Actors performing are in the same city as you, at the same time. They have probably read the same news as you, gone through the same snowstorm, shopped at the same stores. A line in the play might be especially relevant that day, and the actor saying it knows it, and the audience knows it.

I was in a 1950s' play that mentioned the levees in New Orleans, and Hurricane Katrina had just hit that week. It had new resonance and we all felt it. Even with a play that is 400 years old, it is contemporary, because it is interpreted by, performed by, seen by and

listened to, by people who share the planet, the theatre, at the same time. And that time is *now*.

How to get the most out of going to live theatre

Make an informed choice. Read the descriptions of the plays in theatre brochures or on the Web, or in listings, to see what appeals to you. You might want to read reviews, but there is no guarantee you will have the same response as that reviewer.

In my younger days, when I still read reviews, I attended too many plays where I thought the critic must have been watching a different production. It is all about taste, aesthetics and consequently, totally subjective. You have to see for yourself.

If you are going to a Shakespeare play or a classical play, you might want to read the play first. The language is English, and if delivered by good actors, will be accessible, but it is far denser than our ears are used to these days. But the rewards of classical language, and listening to the thoughts and feelings that that language can encompass, are well worth the effort. Sometimes it is hard to believe something was written hundreds of years ago, it seems so current. Some familiarity with the language and the plot can allow you to focus on the performance.

Fabulous places to see theatre in Ontario

There are the festivals: Stratford, Shaw, Blyth. All the theatres in Toronto, the Theatre Aquarius in Hamilton, The Grand in London, professional theatres in Kitchener, Guelph, Orangeville, St. Catharines. There are summer theatres and "theatres in the parks" all over the province. There is infinite variety, yours for the asking. And the paying, of course. But when you pay, you support local industry and living artists. And when someone says, "You had to be there," you can say "I was."



Seana McKenna as Anne Hathaway in *Shakespeare's Will*, 2007 at Stratford Shakespeare Festival.

PHOTO BY RICHARD BAIN

Seana McKenna, an accomplished and award-winning actor, is performing in The Trojan Women and Fuente Ovejuna at the Stratford Festival this season.

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